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BOH talks roles, task force

Health director will no longer attend selectboard meetings

MELINA BOURDEAU
Staff writer

BELCHERTOWN – Following criticism from the Belchertown Selectboard, the Board of Health discussed the COVID-19 Task Force, communication between elected officials and the board's role.

Quabbin Health Director Judy Metcalf began the discussion, telling the board she would no longer attend Selectboard meetings.

"I can no longer lend my credence and my professional reputation by attending the

Selectboard meetings in their current format," she said. "There is just too much misinformation being relayed in that setting. It's been uncivilized. There has been a lot of projection, what-about-ism being perpetrated. The setup is not congruent to giving concrete real information in real time to people."

She said difficulties include waiting in a que to speak and getting a microphone cut off as well.

Metcalf explained there are other ways to communicate with members of the community.

"My mission is to provide clear, concrete, scientific information to people," Metcalf said. "I can do that here; I can do that in other formats."

See **BOH**, page 5 •



I CAN NO LONGER LEND MY CREDENCE AND MY PROFESSIONAL REPUTATION BY ATTENDING THE SELECTBOARD MEETINGS IN THEIR CURRENT FORMAT."

JUDY METCALF
QUABBIN HEALTH DIRECTOR

BELCHERTOWN

BOS approved Lampson Brook Farm BOD

MELINA BOURDEAU
Staff writer

BELCHERTOWN – The Selectboard unanimously approved the appointment of three members to the Lampson Brook Farm Parcel Board of Directors on Monday evening, establishing the group to take on "an ambitious agenda," said Selectboard Chair Gail Gramarossa.

Earlier this month, an act providing for the permanent protection and stewardship of the historic Lampson Brook Farm, sponsored by Senator Eric P. Lesser was signed into law by Governor Charlie Baker.

Representative Thomas M. Petrolati helped secure the passage of this legislation in the House as one of his final acts before completing his term. This law allows for the permanent protection of the five separate parcels that make up the approximate 430-acre historic site known as the Lampson Brook Farm.

Agricultural Commission member Tammy Ryan, Belchertown EDIC member Jonathan Spiegel and Conservation Commission David Haines were appointed to the Board of Directors. There

See **LAMPSON**, page 12 •

COVID-19

Vaccinations available for 75 and older

Quabbin Health Director talks how to sign up

MELINA BOURDEAU
Staff writer

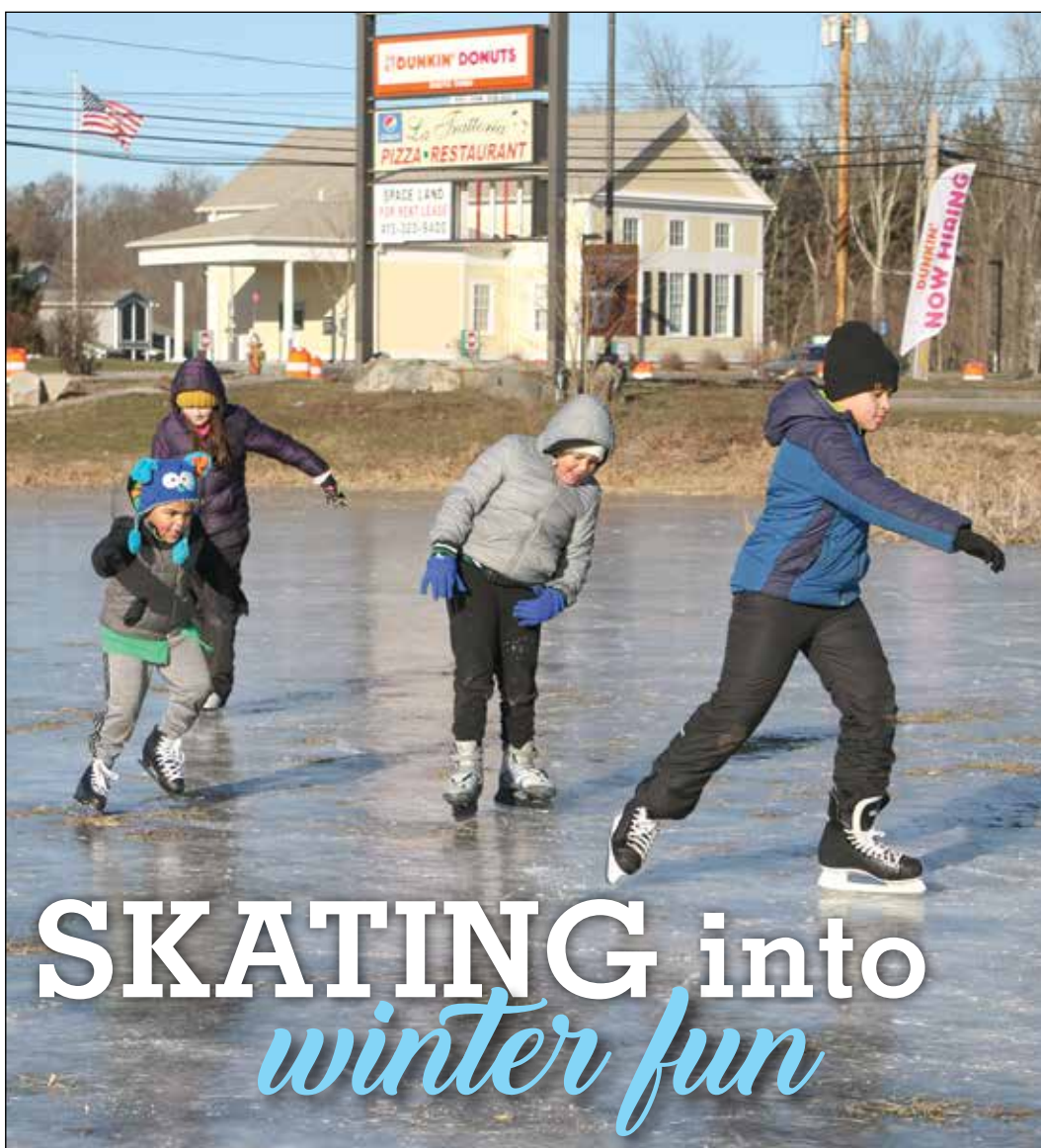
BELCHERTOWN – As COVID-19 vaccination phases continue, signing up to get a vaccination can be time consuming. However, Quabbin Health District Director Judy Metcalf is working to make the process easier.

As of Monday, Feb. 1, seniors 75 and older became eligible to get vaccinated. Metcalf said staff built out the websites for both Ware and Belchertown to be able to give people information about the vaccine.

"I also did an interview with Lew (Louraine) from BCTV," Metcalf said, adding she did an interview with Ware Community Television as well.

Metcalf said there are two regional vaccination centers, one at the UMass Campus Center in Amherst and the other at Amherst Regional High School through

See **VACCINATION**, page 8 •



SKATING into
winter fun

(From left to right) Torah DelPrete, 10, Ricky DelPrete, 6, Deshawn DelPrete, 7, and TJ Mann, 11, took to the ice near Cold Spring School to practice ice skating.

PHOTO BY MELINA BOURDEAU

GRANBY

Judge denies request of Granby woman

NORTHAMPTON – A judge has denied a request by Cara Rintala to be released from prison pending her appeal from a 2016 conviction for first degree murder in the 2010 death of her wife.

Rintala, 53, was found guilty by a Hampshire Superior Court jury on Oct. 7, 2016, for strangling Annamaria Rintala in the basement of their Granby home. It was the third time the case was tried, after two previous trials resulted in hung juries, according to a press release from the Northwest District Attorney's Office.

First Assistant District Attorney Steven Gagne and Deputy District Attorney Jennifer Suhl represented the Commonwealth in the case. Defense attorneys David Hoose and Luke Ryan represented Rintala.

Rintala is appealing the verdict on the basis that the Commonwealth should not have been allowed to introduce expert testimony regarding ceiling paint that was poured at the crime

See **RINTALA**, page 13 •



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COMMUNITY

Belchertown seeks cases drop, still in red

MELINA BOURDEAU
Staff writer

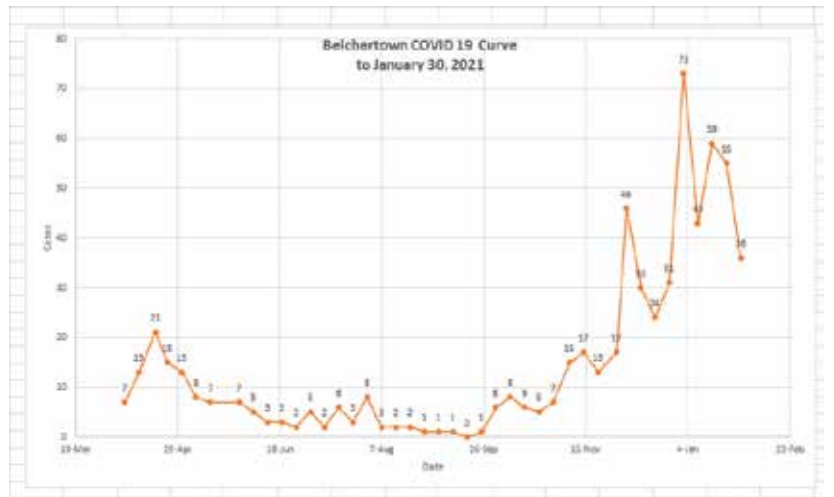
BELCHERTOWN – While the town's COVID-19 cases have dropped, its designation continues to be in the red as of Tuesday, Feb. 2.

There were 36 new cases of COVID-19 in the period from Sunday, Jan. 17 to Saturday, Jan. 30 in Belchertown, according to the Quabbin Health District. The total cases are now 602. There was one new death from COVID-19, bringing the total to 18 residents who died due to the virus.

During this weekly period there were 1,182 COVID-19 tests performed. There were a total of 22,813 tests as of Jan. 27.

State metrics from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health show Belchertown in the red, but rates were lower than the last two-week period.

The current case positivity rate for the period of Jan. 10 to Jan. 23 is 5.47%, last period was 5.75%. The rate per 100,000 is also lower. Currently, Belchertown has 45.8 cases



COURTESY GRAPHIC

Belchertown has seen a drop in COVID-19 cases, but remain in the red designation.

per 100,000, and last period they were 46.23.

Quabbin Health District Director Judy Metcalf explained there are concerns about mutations of the virus.

“On everyone’s radar is the variance of the virus, the mutation from the UK, one from South Africa and

Brazil which has been found in two states,” she said. “There are national public health experts I follow, and they are getting concerned about what is going to happen six to 12 weeks down the road.”

She said the matter is on her radar.

Oriole mascot merchandise sale

BELCHERTOWN – The Belchertown High School class of 2022 launch of their new, contact free, fundraiser on Feb. 1. In conjunction with the Belchertown local vendor, Soundscape Merchandise, the class is excited to offer the sale of a variety of custom designed Oriole mascot inspired apparel, from Feb. 1 to Feb. 15.

Boris the Oriole is now branded as the mascot across all Belchertown Public Schools: Cold Spring, Swift River, Chestnut Hill, Jabish Brook and Belchertown High schools. Through this apparel sale, the class of 2022 offers Oriole themed merchandise to fit hatching preschoolers, fledgling students, seniors ready to fly the BHS nest, parents, grandparents, alumni and residents. Hoodies, t-shirts, leisure sleep pants, sweatpants and knitted pom-pom winter caps are available in youth

and adult sizes.

If you have a Belchertown Public School student, please consider updating the school mascot emblem attire by placing an order through the contact free website sponsored by Soundscape Merchandise at <https://belchertownoriolegear.itemorder.com/sale>. Soundscape Merchandise online ordering will also detail the contact free delivery option. Orders will be fulfilled and shipped on March 1; ordered items will not be in production until after the class of 2022 online store closes on Feb. 15.

This year, since the traditional fundraisers have not been possible, the class of 2022 hopes to supplement the class’ fundraising with this Oriole themed apparel sale. Proceeds will support future class of 2022 activities. The class of 2022 is grateful for your participation.

Knights to host curbside takeout

BELCHERTOWN – The Belchertown Knights of Columbus Council 10698 is sponsoring its monthly curbside take-out dinner on Saturday Feb. 20 from 3 to 6 p.m. at the St. Francis of Assisi Social Center at 14 Park St., across from the Belchertown Common municipal parking lot.

Where diners have enjoyed previous dinners featuring the Knights’ famous Belchertown Fair Food Booth’s sausage grinders in past months, the group is giving them a winter warm up, serving this month a pasta with sausages dinner.

The dinner also includes a roll and choice of drink of soda or bottled water for \$10.

Only 125 dinners will be prepared, so the Knights can make them fresh to order at the time you pull up. Once they’re gone, they’re gone! Due to the demand expected, come early to get your dinner.

Don’t want to miss out? You can place an order in advance by checking out the Facebook event on the Council’s page at www.facebook.com/belchertownkocf or their website page at <https://www.stfrancisbelchertown.com/knights-of-columbus>. Payment is cash only at the time of pickup.

Proceeds of the dinner goes towards the council and the charitable works your local Knights of Columbus performs in the community.

So don’t delay and miss out. Order your dinner and help the Knights in serving their community.

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Rail plan advocates planning next step in approval

MICHAEL HARRISON
mharrison@tury.com

PALMER — Now that they've had a chance to digest MassDOT's extensive feasibility study of a proposed passenger rail link connecting Pittsfield to Boston, including stops in Palmer and Springfield, the Rail Stop Steering Committee is planning its next course.

The town-appointed committee met recently to discuss the study and set priorities, including how to prod state and federal officials not already on-board to start acting on the project. One major issue on which all those in the meeting seem to agree is the study vastly underestimates the number of riders it would attract — a critical component of the cost benefit analysis that determines if a project is eligible for federal funding.

That's a complaint committee members and others made after a draft study — the report's predecessor — was released a few months prior. They made those feelings known and MassDOT appears to have acknowledged it in the final report, which concludes that further study is justified.

Wary of the slow pace of government and a historic reluctance to invest in large scale infrastructure programs, committee members want to seize any momentum created by the MassDOT study.

"We have to keep pushing it forward so it's on their radar," committee Chair Ben Hood said.

"Sometimes they have money and you have to ask for it. I always hoped they would want to invest in [transportation infrastructure]."

According to the report, "the study has entailed a comprehensive civic engagement process involving residents, the study's Advisory Committee — a group comprised of individuals representing diverse perspectives from Pittsfield to Boston, and other stakeholders in a series of meetings and through online interaction. This included cooperative development of the following goals for the project:

- Provide better transportation options to and from Western Massachusetts
- Support economic development throughout the East — West rail corridor
- Improve the attractiveness of Western Massachusetts as an affordable place to live
- Reduce the number of automobile trips along the corridor
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air quality impacts from transportation

It also shares many of the same conclusions as advocates of the plan, including members of the steering committee and Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop.

"MassDOT recognizes that a robust transportation system is essential to providing residents, businesses, and visitors with mobility to satisfy their economic, personal, and recreational needs. Passenger rail transportation can be an important component of a multi-modal transportation system that increases travel options and reduces greenhouse gas emissions," the report states.

The report also says that "Fast and frequent passenger rail service in the East-West Rail Corridor could enhance mobility and connectivity for Corridor communities, provide residents and stakeholders with



Advocates of a passenger train line connecting Pittsfield to Boston with stops in Palmer and Springfield found some things they liked, and some things they didn't, in MassDOT's recently released study.

COURTESY PHOTO

additional travel options, and catalyze new economic opportunities, such as development around stations. Improved connectivity among job centers and better mobility for potential workers could increase employment opportunities for workers and expand the talent pool available to employers by better linking the western, central, and eastern regions of the Commonwealth with each other and with a broader travel market."

There are three final alternatives in the study, which carries the weight of a \$1 million investment by the state and does back up at least some of the advocates' claims of the benefits the rail line would provide. All of the alternatives include depots in Palmer and Springfield.

Still, it did not offer the robust endorsement some hoped for.

"It's not what we wanted, but it didn't close the door," Hood said.

Now, he said, the committee needs to focus on "thinking about how this affects Palmer."

Committee member and Palmer Town Planner Linda Leduc isn't completely satisfied, but she took away some positives.

"It's an interesting study," she said.

"It was limited in scope [but] it needed to be done to get us to the next phase of engineering and construction. MassDOT is trying to move us out of the planning stage. In Palmer, we did all the things we needed to do to get in all the alternatives, which is a great result."

Like others, Leduc contests the study's estimate of ridership and said it's critical to present accurate numbers that will allow the project to become eligible for federal funding — a high bar. She remains convinced MassDOT does not project a realistic figure and that taking a second look — as MassDOT calls for in the study — will reveal a more favorable cost benefit assessment.

"One thing I thought was interesting is this traditional assessment did not include an extensive look into cost benefit," Leduc said.

"The position of the state to better itself with the federal calculation — which we fall very short of getting

any federal money — we need to raise that. We have a true benefit from the rail stop that can [improve] that calculation."

Costing upwards of \$1 billion, the project is likely to face steep opposition by state and federal budget hawks, necessitating the need, Leduc and other committee members said, to lobby lawmakers who have not already pledged their support. U.S. Rep. Richard Neal said he's for creating the passenger line. Leduc and Hood both noted that President Joe Biden could be a likely ally.

Unlike assistance with road and air projects, municipal rail construction is not typically earmarked for federal funding, Leduc said.

"Not a single state in the country gets federal assistance for a rail project," she said.

"The only way to get federal funding is to get an increase in our benefit cost and potentially get that federal calculation viewed differently. Cost will be a big problem moving forward. We need to have conversations with our federal legislators. Joe Biden historically has been supportive of rail, so that's all good."

Hood agreed. "I think our politicians will be important in this," he said.

So far, so good.

"All of our representatives in the western part of the state and even further west, are hot on this issue," Leduc said.

Both of them credited state Senators Eric Lesser and Anne Gobi and Mass. House Rep. Todd Smola for their support. Committee members agreed on the need to remain proactive.

After the study was released earlier this month, Lesser issued a statement in which we called the report "an important step in moving this project from conception to reality" and, "I want to thank the countless advocates, community organizations, business organizations, elected officials, and everyday citizens from every corner of our Commonwealth who wouldn't take no for an answer and demanded state-wide rail

investment."

The senator's remarks echoed some of those on the steering committee.

"As MassDOT acknowledges, the study remains incomplete," Lesser said.

"Most importantly, the ridership estimates are far too low and do not reflect comparable rail links around the country or the economic growth the rail line will spur. The study also does not take into account the significant environmental benefits from the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as tens of thousands of cars are taken off the road. I look forward to working with MassDOT, our state legislative delegation, as well as our federal partners such as House Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal, House Rules Committee Chairman Jim McGovern, Senator Warren, and Senator Markey to make statewide passenger rail service a reality."

Looking Forward

There could be more public money available to help get the projecting moving forward. If Gov. Charlie Baker signs the legislature's transportation bond bill into law, more money would become available to pay for construction planning.

"Palmer has a place in there," Hood said.

"If Gov. Baker signs it and that money becomes available, that would be a way of moving forward. Eventually, it could snowball into bigger things."

Committee member Sarah Szebak asked during the Jan. 14 meeting if the town would be responsible for the cost of building a platform and others wondered who decides where the platform would be built, sparking an in-depth discussion.

Scarlet Lamothe, manager of Steaming Tender, created inside the old Palmer rail depot building, signed into the Zoom meeting from inside the restaurant. The old station could be repurposed to create new one, she suggested.

"The station that I'm in right now — is that something that can be discussed?" Lamothe asked.

"We haven't been able to get down to those nitty gritty details," Leduc said.

"Is it time? I think it could be. It might be time for the town to spend some money to [study and] narrow down the best location."

"As far as location of the platform, that's something the town and engineers have to figure out," Anne Miller said.

"It can go a lot of different ways. Palmer may not be in position to do that. I think working out the location is something we need to do in advance so the federal government doesn't come in and say 'no, it should go here.'"

Miller is amenable to the idea of creating a Palmer depot in or around the old one and she noted that Steaming Tender, opened by Lamothe's parents, acquired property around the restaurant.

"I think that should be part of the conversation," Miller said.

"This is something I think we need to put together soon — ASAP," Lamothe said.

"We have to show MassDOT we're ready

See **RAIL STUDY**, page 11 •

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Members of the Massachusetts Veterans of Foreign Wars Honor Guard pose together at Szot Park in Chicopee.

VFW Honor Guard welcomes new President

DALTON ZBIERSKI
Staff Writer

WASHINGTON D.C. – Jan. 20 will forever be remembered by the members of the Massachusetts Veterans of Foreign Wars Honor Guard, which partook in the virtual "Parade Across America," celebrating President Joe Biden's inauguration.

A group of five veterans was chosen to represent Massachusetts on a national stage, as the country ushered in the Biden Administration.

"This is the first time in the history of the inauguration parade that all 56 states and territories were featured. We've done a number of high-profile parades in the past, but this is the highest honor that we've been involved in. We knew we were up to the task and put as much energy into this as possible," said Commander of the Massachusetts Military Order of the

Purple Heart, US Army veteran and South Hadley Brian Willette, who carried a rifle during the procession.

Willette partook in the venture alongside his daughter Christine Lupacchino, a U.S. Air Force and Chicopee resident, who serves as Commander of the Honor Guard.

Eric Segundo, a U.S. Army veteran from Springfield, Rene Fuyertes, a U.S. Navy veteran from Randolph and Keith Buckhout, a U.S. Marine and Air Force veteran from Easthampton rounded out the five-person unit.

On Jan. 20, the Honor Guard paid tribute to the "Greatest Generation," veterans who served in WWII, and the "Newest Greatest Generation," members of today's all-volunteer U.S. Armed Forces.

During its presentation, members of the Honor Guard wore WWII Airborne uniforms, revealing the distinctive shoulder insignia of the 82nd

Airborne Division, the country's first division comprised entirely of all-volunteer Paratroopers.

While the Honor Guard filmed and submitted its routine more than a month ago, it did not receive word of its selection until two days prior to the inauguration. Fortunately, the group had prepared itself for the spotlight.

The Honor Guard was featured on national television twice last Wednesday, once during the virtual parade and again in the evening on "Celebrating America," a special inauguration program hosted by actor Tom Hanks.

"This event really encapsulated everything that we stand for," Willette said.

The national stage was not too big for the five-person squad of combat veterans, who hone their skills at a wide range of events each year.

"Whether it's posting the colors at a little league championship game here in western Mass or at a Red Sox game, the same professionalism and dedication goes into each Honor Guard presentation," said Willette.

Willette was especially proud of his daughter, Lupacchino, who offered a congratulatory message to President Biden. Participating in the Honor Guard is a family tradition that dates back many decades.

"My dad, her grandfather, was a member of the old United States Honor Guard in Washington D.C. in the 1950s," said Willette. "I often think it skipped me and went to her; the expertise. She really knows her stuff as our Commander. I couldn't be prouder."

For Willette, the recent attack on the U.S. Capital brought added significance to an honor that he already considered to be special in its own right. He explained how the events that unfolded in Washington D.C. several weeks ago impacted his approach.

See VFW, page 5 •



U.S. Army veteran Brian Willette of the MA VFW Foreign Wars Honor Guard partook in the virtual "Parade Across America" on Jan. 20 alongside his daughter, Honor Guard Commander Christine Lupacchino, a U.S. Air Force and Chicopee resident, Eric Segundo, a U.S. Army veteran from Springfield, Rene Fuyertes, a U.S. Navy veteran from Randolph and Keith Buckhout, a U.S. Marine and Air Force veteran from Easthampton.

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NEWS & FEATURES

As a paper of record, we attempt to cover all general news, personality profiles, and community features that we know about. This includes all selectmen and school committee meetings as well as spot planning board, board of health, finance, and other town meetings determined by the issue's relevance to our readers. There are the annual major community event features that we should always cover, but we are more than open to suggestions of other features to celebrate the fabric of our communities and their many interesting occupants. Our loyal advertisers provide funding for this paid staff coverage.

For more information on news or community features for The Sentinel, please email sentinel@turley.com

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Library lunch hour for teens

BELCHERTOWN – Do you like talking about books? Do you like giving and getting book recommendations? Are you a teen in grade 7 to 12?

The Clapp Memorial Library will host a virtual Library Lunch Hour for teens on Thursday, Feb. 18, from 1 to 1:45 p.m.. Bring your own lunch and join us to talk about books! Attendees will share what they are reading, their favorite book from last year, and what they're excited to read next. To receive the event meeting link, teens must email clapplibrarytab@gmail.com to register.

VFW • from page 4

"The events of Jan. 6 added special weight to this day. The attack on the Capital, I feel, was a direct attack on our Constitution," said Willette. "It increased the magnitude and gave us that extra pride. Being all veterans, we've sworn to uphold the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic, and I feel that we played a role in upholding that Constitution on Jan. 20, participating in the inauguration."

College NOTES

QCC announces Fall 2020 Semester Dean and Merit Lists

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College has released its Fall 2020 semester Dean and Merit Lists. A total of 577 students were named to the College's Dean's List and 953 students were named to the Merit List.

Students named to the Dean's List must have a Quality Point Average (QPA) of 3.5 or higher and have earned 12 or more credits in a given semester. Students named to the Merit List must have a QPA of 3.5 or higher and have earned 6 or more credits in a given semester, but fewer than 12 credits.

Taylor Catino and Angela Jachym of Granby.

Joe Rees named a Presidential Scholar at Clarkson University

POTSDAM, NY – Joe Carson Rees, of Amherst, a freshman majoring in aeronautical engineering, was named a Presidential Scholar for the fall 2020 semester at Clarkson University.

Presidential Scholars must achieve a minimum 3.80 grade-point average and carry at least 14 credit hours.

As a private, national research university, Clarkson is a leader in technological education and sustainable economic development through teaching, scholarship, research and innovation.

Kaitlyn Foley named to Goodwin University's President's List

EAST HARTFORD, CT – Kaitlyn Foley of Belchertown earned a place on Goodwin University's President's List for the Summer 2020 Session. The Summer 2020 President's List includes 375 students, all of whom scored a perfect 4.0 GPA.

Goodwin University in East Hartford, Connecticut, is an innovative learning community that empowers hard-working students to become sought-after employees. We tailor our programs to address the needs of employers, and we shape them to fit the lives of students. Classes are conveniently offered year-round - days, evenings, weekends, and online.

Matteo Picardi of Belchertown, named to Springfield College Dean's List

SPRINGFIELD – Springfield College has named Matteo Picardi from Belchertown, MA to the dean's list for academic excellence for the 2020 fall semester.

Picardi has a primary major of Criminal Justice.

The criteria for selection to the Dean's List are as follows: The student must have completed a minimum of 12 credit hours of graded coursework for the term, exclusive of "P" grades. The student must not have any incompletes or missing grades in the designated term. The student must have a

minimum semester grade average of 3.500 for the term.

Evan Rutherford of Amherst Named to McDaniel College Dean's List

WESTMINSTER, MD – Evan Rutherford of Amherst has been recognized for outstanding academic achievement by being named to the McDaniel College Fall 2020 Dean's List with Honors.

Highest honors are earned for a semester grade point average of 3.90 or higher, high honors for a grade point average of 3.70-3.89, and honors for a 3.50-3.69 grade point average.

For more information about McDaniel College, visit www.mcdaniel.edu.

Althea Saklad named to the Curry College Fall 2020 Dean's List

MILTON—Curry College is proud to announce that Althea Saklad of Belchertown has been named to the Dean's List for the Fall 2020 semester. Saklad majoring in Business Administration, is among the roughly 1,000 students that have received the distinction, a marker of academic excellence and high achievement.

To earn a place on the list, full-time undergraduate students - those who carry 12 or more graded credits per semester - must earn a 3.3 grade-point-average (GPA) or higher.

BOH • from page 1

Metcalf described the last two Selectboard meetings as "hostile and unhelpful," with "lots of throwing everyone under the bus because no one wants to make a hard decision."

On Monday, Jan. 26, Selectboard member Nick O'Connor said he believed there was an issue with consistency because the Selectboard and School Committee made decisions that didn't align with one another, causing confusion.

"We are two fractured groups trying to be consistent; neither have the power they need to enact consistent responses in the community," O'Connor said.

He said he took issue with "communication and policy at the elected official level."

"The Board of Health should be taking information around metrics and making decisions based on that, and those should get communicated

out," he said.

He also expressed concerns about the frequency of the Board of Health meetings, which occur once a month, typically on a Monday evening at the same time as the Selectboard meets.

Board of Health member Ken Elstein and Chair LeeAnne Connolly said the boards need to be able to cooperate during such unprecedented times.

"I think some of the criticisms might be valid," Elstein said. "But they should not be personal. I will say I was amused when I thought about that the five members of this board are not experts on public health issues, coming from the Selectboard who are not all experts on police, EMT, senior, library issues...yet those are departments for which they have responsibility."

Connolly added that the group must act accordingly during such unprecedented circumstances, which she hopes will never happen again in their lifetimes.

"We have to work together. We can't have in-house fighting, not with us, but with other committees," she said. "It has to stop. I don't know how it would happen, but I wish it would stop."

Board of Health members also stated they were not public health experts.

Member Hope Guardenier said the members of the board are deeply concerned about the well-being and the health of the town, but are advisors and participants - not experts.

"When I ran for the Board of Health, I didn't run because I am a public health expert. We have public health experts, they are the staff of the Quabbin Health District," she said. "We are grateful to have these public health experts who can advise of what the current state of the science is during this unprecedented pandemic...I think it is unfortunate that there is an expectation that if you're on the Board of Health, you're a public health

expert."

Referencing frustration expressed by members of the Selectboard that the decision to shut down town programming was not being made the Board of Health during a special Selectboard meeting two weeks ago, Elstein emphasized the importance of the COVID-19 Task Force.

"This is why it's so important that the task force meet and coordinate, but it's not going to happen if each of these boards go off by themselves," he said.

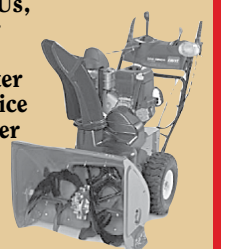
Guardenier said the point of the task force was to create consistency.

"The task force does serve a purpose in terms of a place for us to take action - create a hotline, messaging, signs," she said. "There's also making sure we're all on the same page...I think it's more of the boards getting together and talking about what they're doing, not having Judy reiterate what she was saying here on Thursday."

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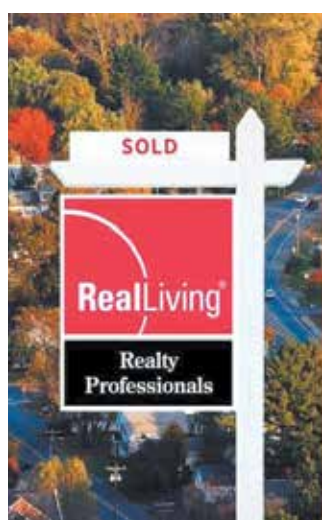


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■ OPINION

EDITORIAL

Western Mass. needs more COVID vaccine sites

Phase II of the Massachusetts COVID-19 vaccination program rolled out Monday. The bleak weather that ushered in the new week turned out to be an apt metaphor for the plan so far, especially if you reside in Western Mass.

Due to a lack of supply of the vaccine and high demand by residents waiting to be inoculated, prioritizing which residents are first in line makes sense. Healthcare workers, first-responders, and other categories of people facing the highest risk were designated for the first phase. The second phase prioritizes those age 75 and older, followed by seniors age 65 and up, people with certain underlying conditions, then other front-line workers, such as grocery store staff and teachers. Everyone else is expected to become eligible in April, assuming enough vaccine doses are available.

That part of the plan is sound. We'll even say it's fair because the most vulnerable among us and those doing essential work who can't do their jobs while quarantining should be protected first while waiting for vaccine production to catch up with demand.

What's lacking is a plan for mass inoculation sites in Western Mass. If you take a look at the distribution site map on mass.gov, you'll see a lone red star, which represents a mass site, in our entire region. Most of what you'll see are green stars signifying local health care providers and blue stars that are effectively wishful thinking because those are for pharmacies and right now, none of our local chains are offering shots.

Hampden County alone has over 466,000 residents, yet Eastfield Mall in Springfield is the one mass vaccination site. Glance over toward Boston on the distribution map and there's a solid wall of red stars, most notably Fenway Park and Gillette Stadium.

How ironic that the part of the Commonwealth with the most open space hasn't been leveraged to create pop-up vaccination clinics. Yes, you could practically fit all of Chicopee into Fenway while filling Gillette with the combined populations of Pittsfield and Ludlow, but what we lack in sheer numbers we make up for with resources.

Fred Ferguson, owner of Palmer Motorsports Park, said he'd gladly open his facility for use as an inoculation site if asked. Brimfield has acres of fields where flea markets are held in-season that could be temporarily repurposed. Not to mention farms just about everywhere that could be suitable.

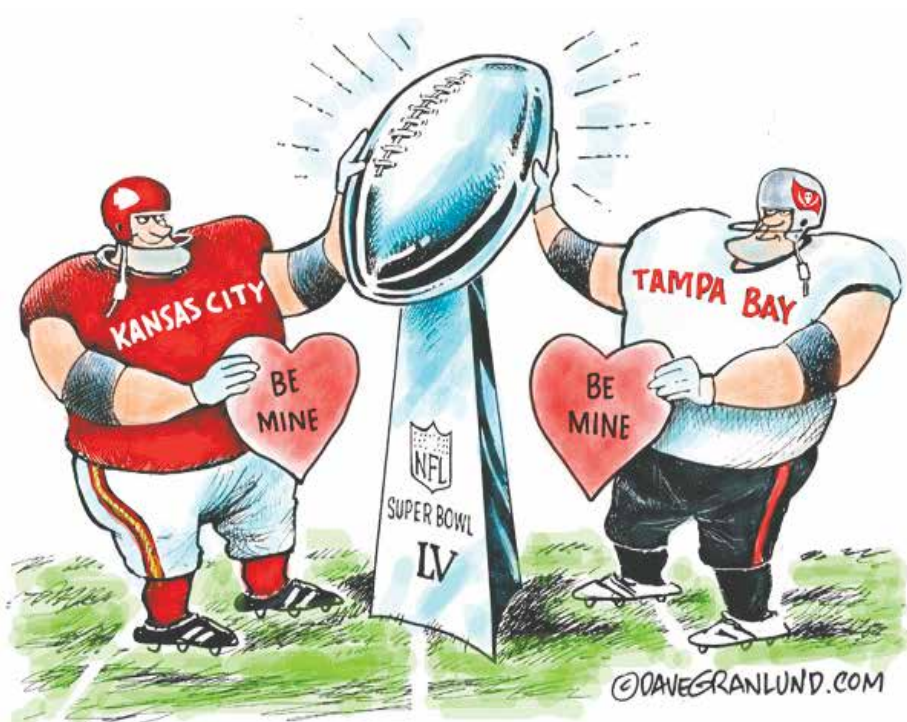
There's a long list of possibilities if the COVID-19 Task Force would only consider expanding access in our region. And it should.

Another improvement we'd like to see is the sign-up process. The online portal set up to request a shot opened to poor reviews, especially from the senior citizen segment, who found it less than user-friendly. Despite Gov. Charlie Baker's exasperated retort that it couldn't possibly be any easier, the fact is too many seniors couldn't navigate it.

In response, state senators Eric Lesser and Anne Gobi led a bipartisan effort to prod the Taskforce into setting up a special 1-800 call center to book appointments. Baker seemed agreeable and hopefully by next week if not sooner, that centralized system will be up and running. Time is of the essence when working to end a pandemic and the more those eligible in this phase are encouraged to sign up for the vaccine, the better off we'll all be.

Primarily though, the task force needs a plan to create more mass sites in our region. Those eligible now deserve more options for getting their initial shot and eventual booster. And hopefully, by phase III, everyone still waiting to be inoculated can do that quickly and without having too travel far.

Just because we're rural, doesn't mean we want to be more vulnerable to COVID-19 than our fellow citizens to the east.



LETTERS

Is there a doctor in the house?

Letter to the editor

Politics is not for the weak of heart! I was disparaged, very publicly, by a member of the Selectboard when my words were taken out of context of the larger discussion. I want the residents of Belchertown to know that I take my position as the Board of Health Chair very seriously and thank you for electing me to the Board of Health. My qualifications to serve on the Board are numerous: holding a Master of Science Degree, coupled with my 20 plus years as the Conservation Administrator for Belchertown and numerous education seminars, certifications, awards and membership in many organizations. Be that as it may, I am not trying to discourage others from getting on boards and committees within the town. We need dedicated and respected members of the community to get involved and work

together on town and community problems. Right now, COVID-19 must be our main priority. The virus is running rapid through our community. My comments were taken out of context at a Selectboard's special meeting on Jan. 19, 2021. This meeting was about the spread of COVID-19 within our town. I stated that "I was not a health expert." I was referring to the ongoing discussion over the COVID-19 spread. I stated that I was not a medical expert. I am not an epidemiologist, not an infectious disease doctor. I incorporate the public health advice and recommendations from the Board of Health Director and staff. Let us stop all this pettiness and start working together to fight this pandemic.

Belchertown deserves more from its elected officials.

LeeAnne Connolly,
Board of Health Chair

Grateful for quick response

Letter to editor

Last month a medical emergency prompted us to call 911. The Belchertown EMT and police response was within minutes. Thank you Officer Krol and Officer Roney and the EMT responders, whose

professionalism and expertise managed the situation thus avoiding a tragedy. We are so thankful to have such dedicated and knowledgeable services in our town.

Carol and Edward Mierzewski

How to grow nutritious sweet potatoes

The sweet potato is a nutritional powerhouse. According to www.nutritiondata.com, it is "low in sodium, and very low in saturated fat and cholesterol. It is also a good source of dietary fiber, vitamin B6 and potassium, and a very good source of vitamin A, vitamin C and manganese." If these facts aren't reason enough to try adding this veggie to our garden this growing season,

delight in the fact that it is also a very pretty vine.

If my memory is correct, my Mom attempted to grow sweet potatoes one summer when I was child. It wasn't all that impressive as I recall, at least not as impressive as her peanut growing experiment! Anyhow, the one thing we have against

See GARDEN, page 7 •

ON THE GARDEN



Roberta McQuaid

SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

Questions benefit amount after claim delayed

RUSSELL GLOOR
Guest columnist

Dear Rusty: I am having problems getting answers from the national Social Security office or the local agent who I first spoke with to apply for my benefits. I am 70 in January 2021, and applied for benefits at the end of August 2020. I asked to have benefits start in October 2020, with my first payment received in November. I was told that the benefit for applying at age 69 and nine months would not be received until

January of 2021. Until then, I would receive the 69 years and 0 months payment, which I received in November and December of 2020. In January 2021 however, I received the same 2020 payment plus the COLA increase. I've asked what's up at the local office and have been waiting for a return phone call. My first question: is the amount I received in November and December last year correct: it is only the age 69 amount, not the 69 and 9 months benefit for the age I was at the time? And second, if that's true, when in 2021 should I get my full amount?

Signed: Confused

Dear Confused: I'll try to clear this up for you. Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) of 0.667% are earned monthly for each full month you delay claiming after your full retirement age (which for you is 66). But although you earn delayed retirement credits monthly, Social Security only applies them in January of each year. You don't lose them; they just don't do the

See SSI, page 13•

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GARDEN • from page 6

us is that sweet potatoes require a long growing season, somewhere between 90-150 days. The tender shoots are cold sensitive, and must be planted into the ground after all danger of frost has passed. In our area we use Memorial Day as our “frost-free date.” Then, the edible root, aka the sweet potato, must be harvested before the first frost of fall. By my records, the first frost usually occurs in early October. This equates to 100 days bare minimum of growing time. Still interested, read on.

You can purchase plants through the mail or try sprouting your own from sweet potatoes purchased from the grocery store. Dick Raymond, author of my favorite gardening book of all time, “Garden Way’s Joy of Gardening” (Storey Publishing \$24.95), has some great tips for doing this: Seven or eight weeks prior to Memorial Day, simply cut the spuds in half length-wise and lay them down in moist peat moss in a shallow tray. Cover with plastic wrap and place in a sunny window until sprouting occurs. Slips should be separated and planted about six inches deep, 12 to 15 inches apart from one another. He advises to water well for the first two weeks; after that sweet potato plants are reportedly somewhat drought tolerant. When fertilizing, choose a formulation that is a bit lower in nitrogen, otherwise you will have lots of vines at the expense of sweet potatoes.

Dig up your bounty on a dry day, being extra careful not to damage the skin. Don’t leave them exposed to the sun for more than an hour and don’t wash them either. Picky, aren’t they? Fresh sweet potatoes aren’t all that sweet, a curing period of two weeks in the dark at 70 to 80 degrees and at high humidity will bring out the great flavor we are accustomed to. Long-term storage should be at temperatures around 60 degrees.

To make sweet potato fries simply cut the root into thick wedges, then toss them with seasoned olive oil (or a favorite salad dressing). Bake on a cookie sheet at 350 degrees for one hour, flipping occasionally. Some ketchup as a dip may help reluctant kids to give the “funny orange French fries” a try.

It’s my hope that you all enjoy growing sweet potatoes from “scratch,” so to speak!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 28 years, she has held the position of staff horticulturalist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to ekennedy@turley.com with “Gardening Question” in the subject line.

SENIORS

Belchertown COA February update

STAFF REPORT

BELCHERTOWN – The following are updates from Belchertown Council on Aging.

Regarding COVID-19 vaccinations

Information is changing as quickly as it is received, so please be patient while the Senior Center works communicate the most current and accurate information.

At present, it is known that registration for vaccines is only available for those ages 75 or older. As of Feb. 1, the mass.gov/vaccine website has changed, making it even easier to locate vaccination sites. Go to mass.gov/vaccine, then click on the button that asks if you are age 75. Remember, those under 75 are not yet eligible. Then click the link that says Find a location and book your appointment. This allows you to search for location by zip code and has links to each individual site’s registration. Vaccine supply is very limited, so appointments may be difficult to get right away. Additional sites will continue to open as more vaccines become available, and each site has their own registration process. If you are able to be patient, within the next few weeks there should be locations as close as within Belchertown. Please be aware that the regional site in Palmer does not service Belchertown, however the regional site in Amherst at the Amherst Regional High School will. Feel free to call Katy 323-0420 x 501 if you’d like more detailed information or call Jessica at extension 503 for assistance signing up if you don’t have a way to do so yourself.

Masks are mandatory

Please remember, when visiting the Belchertown Senior Center, masks must be worn at all times.

Whether visiting to drop off borrowed medical equipment or requested paperwork, picking up puzzles or items from the community food pantry, kindly remember to wear your mask. Even when outside, regardless if anyone else is currently in the area.

AARP Tax Preparation Service

AARP will not be offering their tax preparation program in Belchertown this year.

As of the printing of this newsletter, it is BCOA’s understanding that AARP is working with Hadley, Ludlow, Chicopee and Holyoke Senior Centers in hopes of offering this program, although there are still no firm plans. Please call those Centers directly for more information.

Do you have skills to share?

The Social Services Dept. is seeking skilled workers to assist older adults in Belchertown. The BCOA keeps, and is updating a private pay list of skilled workers to share with individuals inquiring with specific needs.

Those with skills they would like to share within the community are encouraged to apply. The Senior Center does not employ the worker, simply offers the contact information as a courtesy to those inquiring. Work is performed for individuals on an as needed-basis and the fee charged is agreed upon between worker and Belchertown resident.

Services currently sought and/or contacts being added to:

- Homemaking
- Personal Care
- Transportation to Appts
- Running Errands
- Grocery Shopping
- Hairstylists / Barbers
- Seamstress
- Dog Grooming
- Carpentry
- Electrical
- Plumbing
- Painting
- Yardwork
- Shoveling/Plowing

If you have any of the above skills or other expertise and would like to be a part of the private pay list, please contact Laurene Kendall at 323-0420, ext. 505 for an application. A CORI check and phone interview is required as part of the application process.

iSee You is here!

Although the wait was longer than we had anticipated, the iPads have arrived for the iPad loan pro-

gram. The BCOA have been busy programming them and creating user friendly instructions to accompany them on their journey to your home! Staff will be in touch with those who have expressed interest and if you would like to borrow an iPad please call Jessica or Katy.

Belchertown Age and Dementia Friendly Community Designation: input needed

Please help by attending either or both virtual community forums held on Feb. 24 and March 10. The purpose of the forums is to gather input from residents on the opportunities and challenges facing older adults and people with dementia in Belchertown. The forums are part of a Community Assessment process that the Belchertown Age and Dementia Friendly Working Group is developing with assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

The Age and Dementia Friendly Belchertown project is part of a larger Pioneer Valley initiative with funding from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation. PVPC is providing technical assistance to communities in the Hampden and Hampshire Counties to help them receive the designation of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community.

The results of these forums and the Livable Community Survey will be used to develop a Community Assessment and Action Plan for making Belchertown a more livable community for people of all ages and abilities. Your valuable response to the survey is requested. It can be accessed directly at <https://tinyurl.com/AFBelchertown> and is also posted on the Council on Aging website at https://www.belchertown.org/council_on_aging_senior_center/index. Request a hard copy form by contacting BCOA Executive Director, Jessica Langlois at 413-323-0420, ext 503. All respondents may enter a drawing to receive a Stop and Shop gift card. For Age Friendly Community effort info contact Becky Basch at bbasch@pvpc.org.

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Zonta club hosts conversatio to bridge the racism gap

REGION – The Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley invites the public to join in a community conversation to bridge the gaps that seem to be increasing in the USA’s dialogue around racism.

On Feb. 8, Andrea Bordenca will be facilitating a conversation around the role implicit bias plays when it comes to belonging, inclusivity and race.

The event will be on Feb. 8 from 6 to 7 p.m. on Zoom. The event is free to the public but registration is required.

Contact info@zontaqv.org to receive an invitation and pose a question you would like addressed.

Bordenca is an American-born white

woman who does not claim to be an expert on racism but does claim to be an expert in bringing missing conversations to light. This is what we will be agreeing to engage in this February.

If you’re curious to learn common individual and cultural blind spots, our time together will help bring illumination and allow new possibilities for action to emerge.

One way you can prepare for our time together is to bring attention to your unconscious biases. Think about someone in your life that you don’t often see eye to eye with. What are the opinions you have about that person? The next time you engage in a

conversation, notice the automatic thoughts and judgments that show up. What happens when you notice those and bring yourself fully present to listening and being open to what’s said. A practice to disrupt the thoughts that may drive reaction is to “speak back” what you’re hearing.

Human tendencies and how unconscious habits form to bring intentional awareness will be explored and practice to future conversations.

Andrea Bordenca will be facilitating a conversation around the role implicit bias plays when it comes to belonging, inclusivity and race on Feb. 8.



The History of the St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Holyoke: A Live, Virtual Program

HOLYOKE – On Thursday, Feb. 4 at 6:30 p.m., Wistariahurst will host The History of the St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Holyoke, a live virtual program presented by Abigail Scanlon. This program is free and open to all. Advance registration is required. Spaces are limited.

Ireland Parish, as Holyoke was once known beginning as early as the 1700s, has grown and changed significantly with each generation. But over the last 68 years one thing has remained the same, the celebration of St. Patrick’s Day every March. From humble beginnings in 1952 the Parade has grown in size, celebration, and reputation even as the Irish no longer remained the dominant immigrant population in the city. Bringing together the diverse city, St. Patrick’s Day in Holyoke is a celebration of family, community, and heritage.

This program is open to all members of the public, but has been specially designed

to address the needs of area seniors, many of whom continue to be socially isolated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The program is supported through a Community Development Block Grant - COVID-19 Grant to address, prevent, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic that is administered through the Holyoke Office of Community Development and has been planned in consultation with the Holyoke Council on Aging. Additional support has been provided through NEH CARES Act funding granted by Mass Humanities.

To register for The History of the St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Holyoke or any future programs, please visit www.Wistariahurst.org or contact Eileen Maginnis at the Holyoke Council on Aging at maginnise@holyoke.org. If you have an idea for a topic you’d like to be considered for a future Wistariahurst session, please contact info@wistariahurst.org.

SENIORS • from page 7

Feb. 24 from 6 to 7 p.m.

Focus: The eight domains of livability that go into making a community age friendly.

Feedback from forum participants on the challenges and opportunities experienced in Belchertown by older adults and caregivers.

Register for this forum by using this link: <https://tinyurl.com/AFBForum1>

March 10 from 6 to 7 p.m.

Focus: people living with Dementia and as a Dementia Friendly Community, how to raise awareness, recognize, work with and support people with dementia, and the caregivers who look after them.

Meghan Lemay of the Alzheimer’s Association will speak about the 10 early warning signs of dementia and available services.

Register for the March forum by using this link: <https://tinyurl.com/AFBForum2>

Both forums hosted on Zoom and broadcast live on BCTV with a call-in

number to gather community comments.

Nominations for grocery delivery fees now being accepted

Thank you kindly to all of those who have donated to the Random Acts of Kindness program for the benefit of those who require grocery or prescription medicine delivery and cannot afford the corresponding fees.

If you or someone you know has been advised to take every precaution due to COVID-19 and not shop in stores due to health conditions including but not limited to auto immune deficiency, please nominate him or her for this gift. As funds are limited, the length of time fees are prepaid will vary dependent on the number of requests received. Those nominated must already have an online shopping account established and/or be willing and able to set one up, as well as access and utilize online shopping applications.

If you’re interested in donating or nominating someone, contact Kathy at the senior center.

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CLUES ACROSS
1. Nuclear near reach weapon
5. Of she
8. Hyperbolic function
12. Rice dish
14. A team’s best pitcher
15. Strong and healthy
16. Induces
18. Popular manga series
19. From a distance
20. Split
21. Consumed
22. Cushions
23. All over
26. One who provides food
30. St. __ Girl, brand of beer
31. Walking slowly
32. Wood
33. Semitic gods
34. Bugle

CLUES DOWN
39. 60-minute periods (abbr.)
42. Congressman
44. Plant of the heath family
46. Subdivision of an army
47. Having many different forms
49. Shellfish
50. Latin for hail
51. Between sixth and seventh
56. Maori war dance
57. Precious or semiprecious stone
58. Teeter totter
59. Deity
60. A major division of geological time
61. Fishing net
62. Small Caribbean bird
63. Field force unit
64. Japanese beverage

CLUES DOWN
1. Prevents oil spills
2. Monetary unit
3. The color of the sky
4. Dough used to make tortillas
5. Popular comic strip character
6. Distinct form of a plant
7. Replenishment
8. Has its own altar
9. Expedition to see animals
10. Group of related organisms
11. His and __
13. Frenetically
17. Small integer
24. Unit of energy
25. Studies of culture
26. Taxi
27. Doctors’ group
28. Don’t know when yet

CLUES DOWN
29. Former measure of length
35. Popular CBS series
36. Skin condition
37. Christian creator and ruler of the universe
38. They __
40. Caused severe damage
41. Work done under harsh conditions for no pay
42. One point east of due south
43. Sea eagles
44. Drenched
45. State capital
47. Italian city
48. Sweetheart (archaic)
49. Brief talk
52. Popular disco group: Bee __
53. First Chinese dynasty
54. Military vehicle
55. Chinese Moslem

VACCINATION • from page 1

the Amherst Board of Health.

Amherst released vaccine appointments for clinics to serve people 75 or older for people in Belchertown, Granby, Hadley, Hatfield, Pelham, South Hadley and Ware, according to the town of Amherst.

There is also a vaccination clinic at the Eastfield Mall in Springfield.

“I am working with the eastern region of Baystate Health Care systems to see if we can’t get a clinic to vaccinate patients 75 or older directly, and hopefully open even more especially for people with two or more comorbidities,” Metcalf said.

To aid with the process, state Sen. Eric P. Lesser, D-Longmeadow, filed An Act streamlining COVID-19 vaccination sign-up in Massachusetts (SD.300), with lead co-sponsors state Sen. Anne M. Gobi, D-Spencer, and state Sen. Cindy F. Friedman, D-Arlington.

Metcalf said the state hotline should be running by the end of the week.

This emergency legislation directs the Department of Public Health to immediately stand-up a one-stop digital portal, a 24/7 phone hotline in multiple languages, and statewide text alerts.

Online portal provisions:

Directs the Department of Public Health to immediately establish a centralized, one-stop portal on the mass.gov website to be used to determine eligibility and allow one-stop online sign-up for COVID-19 vaccinations;

Requires the portal to be made available to all residents of Massachusetts and must be accessible via internet and mobile device; and

Requires the portal to be translated and accessible in multiple languages.

Phone hotline provisions:

Directs the Department of Public Health to also immediately establish a centralized phone number for residents of Massachusetts to determine vaccine eligi-

bility and sign-up for COVID-19 vaccinations via said phone number;

Requires vaccine eligibility determination to be accessible in multiple languages; and

Requires the phone number to be staffed 24-hours a day, seven days per week, and must include sufficient staffing to prevent significant wait times for callers.

Public awareness provision:

Directs the Department of Public Health to share information about the portal and phone number with the general public, including, but not limited to, via the “AlertsMA” text-based notification system.

Metcalf received guidance in Belchertown about a potential COVID-19 vaccine clinic from the Board of Health on Monday, Feb. 1.

Metcalf is going to prioritize connecting with the Belchertown Senior Center and to local pharmacy programs to see what potential clinics could occur.

While the board expressed interest in a potential clinic for residents, Metcalf said there were several obstacles from doing so. She said technology would be needed, police details and assistance from the Belchertown Fire Dept. as well.

Members proposed focusing on seniors and the school district for potential vaccination clinics and Metcalf said she would begin working on the senior populations first.

“No one is going to like to hear this, but it will be well into next month, maybe the end of March before there is a sufficient supply (of vaccine) to essential workers and schoolteachers,” Metcalf said. “(For) those 65 and older can get vaccinated, that isn’t open yet. Depending on how much we get in from the federal government that may open sooner. Realistically, there may be opportunity to start talking to pharmacies to receive vaccine.”

Go to <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine> to find information and interactive map with vaccination sites.



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SPORTS

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South Hadley hockey reinstated

Will take in winter season

GREGORY A. SCIBELLI
gscibelli@turley.com

SOUTH HADLEY – The South Hadley School Committee has changed course, voting Monday to allow ice hockey to be played.

The committee had initially denied the proposal for hockey brought forward at a previous meeting, but outcry from the hockey players and their families brought the subject forward again at Monday’s four-hour long meeting.

The issue was brought up immediately, and then the decision was reversed by a 3-1 vote of the committee with one member absent from the meeting.

School committee member Allison Schlachter brought the conversation back forward.

“The decision just was not sitting well with me,” she said.

She reached out to the South Hadley athletic department. She



Members of the South Hadley High School hockey team protest outside Plains Elementary School two weeks ago. The team has had its season reinstated by the school committee.

See **HOCKEY**, page 10 •

RACING

Thompson announces opening weekend events

WATERBURY, Conn. — American-Canadian Tour (ACT) and Pro All Stars Series (PASS) officials have announced the slate of racing for the 46th Thompson Icebreaker on Saturday, April 10 and Sunday April 11. The 82nd season opener at Connecticut’s Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park currently consists of a nine-division card highlighted by the \$10,000-to-win Icebreaker 125 for the Thompson Outlaw Open Modified Series.

The event marks the return of the historic season kick-off after a one-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Icebreaker was first held in 1974 and has become a staple of the Northeast motorsports calendar. It includes two days of racing with an optional Test N’ Tune on Friday, April 9.

All five of Thompson Speedway’s local divisions join the Outlaw Open Modified Series on the card. This includes the



The Icebreaker 125 will kick off Thompson Speedway’s race season.

Sunoco Modifieds, ACT-type Late Models, Limited Sportsmen/8-cylinder Street Stocks, SK Light Modifieds, and Mini Stocks. Laps for each division are to be determined. The purses for these divisions will be similar to those at the Thompson Speedway events

ACT and PASS promoted in 2020.

The PASS Super Late Models headline the Saturday portion of Icebreaker Weekend with a 75-lap event. It is the fifth straight Icebreaker featuring PASS, joining the 2016-2019 editions. PASS

holds their first event of the year in the Northeast after opening the season with a pair of events at North Carolina’s Hickory Motor Speedway.

The NEMA Lites of the Northeastern Midget Association, who are longtime Thompson Speedway supporters, return for another showing at the Icebreaker. The EXIT Realty Pro Truck Challenge rounds out the card. Both series were slated to be part of the 2020 Icebreaker before its cancellation.

Officials are finalizing the full schedule for each day. More information regarding schedules, pricing, and ticketing will be announced over the coming weeks.



The event is part of the Outlaw Open Modified Series

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

See **RACES**, page 11 •

COLLEGE

MASCAC cancels ‘fall in spring’ competition

WESTFIELD – The Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference (MASCAC) announced today that the eight MASCAC Presidents made the difficult decision to cancel the fall in spring semester athletic conference competition, including all indoor and outdoor athletic conference competition. The decision ends the possibility of resuming the fall conference competition during the spring of 2021 but will allow fall and winter student-athletes training opportunities. While there will not be a conference schedule for MASCAC fall sports, member institutions will be allowed to schedule fall sport non-conference games at their discretion.

“The MASCAC office has been meeting regularly with the presidents, athletic directors, athletic trainers and other essential staff to consider ways we can bring our student-athletes back to the playing field safely while adhering to all state, federal and NCAA guidelines,” said MASCAC Commissioner Angela Baumann. “Regrettably, the highly contagious nature of the COVID-19 virus and the risk of community spread through conference competition proved too great a risk to our student-athletes to engage in conference play. With the health and well-being of our

See **MASCAC**, page 11 •

Hampshire association seeking umpires

REGION – The Hampshire Franklin Baseball Umpire Association (HFBUA) is planning to conduct classes for the 2021 baseball season following all recommended COVID-19 protocols including the possibility of on-line instruction. The association covers umpiring of scholastic baseball for all of Hampshire and Franklin county schools registered under MIAA and several other baseball leagues in the area. If you are interested in umpiring baseball or obtaining further information regarding the upcoming classes please contact Roger Booth - Secretary/Treasurer of the HFBUA via email at quilt-hunter@comcast.net.

SPORTS

New umpires needed for 2021 season

REGION – The Western Massachusetts Baseball Umpire Association is looking for individuals who are interested in umpiring baseball at the high school and youth level. The WMBUA services high school baseball and various other leagues in the Greater Springfield area/ Hampden County.

The WMBUA's first year members class will be held for roughly five to six weeks, beginning in February. The class dates right now are fluid as the organization monitors what happens with the COVID-19 pandemic. Class is usually one or two nights per week from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The class takes place in the First Baptist Church of East Longmeadow's classrooms at 50 Parker Street. Classes may also be virtual if COVID-19 does not allow for in-person meetings.

If you are interested in taking the classes, contact Chris Meffen, the WMBUA Secretary, via email at cmeffen8017@gmail.com or visit the WMBUA website at <http://wmbua.org>.

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Pioneers to host Pelham clinic

LUDLOW – Western United Pioneers FC is excited to offer a soccer clinic in Pelham, MA for players in the Massachusetts North Region. The clinic provides off-season training and skill development by WUP FC coaches. The second sessions available.

This program is offered to boys and girls born in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. The four-week program includes one practice per week for a total of \$65 per session. Sessions will consist of a max of 15

players per field (COVID regulation for the players' safety).

SESSION 2:

MONDAYS 2/22, 3/1, 3/8, and 3/15

Boys and Girls Born 2013 and 2014: Session is at 5 p.m.

Boys and Girls Born 2010, 2011, and 2012: Session is at 6 p.m.

The sessions will be held at Pelham Elementary School at 45 Amherst Road, Pelham, MA 01002.

HOCKEY • from page 9

said the social isolation has been tough for students.

More questions were answered and Schlachter proposed allowing the hockey team to be played. Charles Miles cast the lone dissenting vote.

Players initially did not take the decision of not being able to play lightly.

Following the South Hadley School Committee's decision to deny the Tigers an opportunity to play, a protest was held last Saturday morning at Plain Elementary School.

Members of the team assembled at the school to let the school district know how they felt about the decision to cancel their season.

South Hadley ice hockey, which co-ops with neighbor Granby, was prepared to begin its season during the past week before the school committee opted not to allow the sport to play. Basketball is also not being played at South Hadley.

South Hadley ice hockey has been a perennial playoff contender during the past decade. The Tigers have also co-oped with Holyoke in the past, though that partnership recently ended. There has been no movement to renew the partnership.

Athletic Director Eric Castonguay said he gave a presentation to the school committee at the Jan. 4 meeting. The vote was then delayed until later in the month.

"I demonstrated to the committee how we could run a season safely," said Castonguay. "I showed them what I needed for support to ensure safe protocols were being enforced, and an emphasis for now spectators to limit the amount of exposure."

South Hadley participated in the fall season. The school successfully played boys soccer, girls soccer, cross country, and field hockey. Girls volleyball was deferred to the Fall 2 season. Football for all schools was deferred to the fall season.

There were some minor hiccups with a few isolated COVID-19 cases in the fall, but nothing that resulted in any major shut-downs or delays in the fall season, which was also abbreviated and included between 10 and 12 contests.

A limited number of fans were allowed at games during the fall due to the contests being held outdoors, though Castonguay recommended having no fans during the winter sports to ensure the ability for games to be played.

Town surrounding South Hadley are not playing any winter sports, including Granby, Belchertown, and Holyoke.

Sign-ups now available for 2021 Relics softball

LUDLOW – The Western Mass Relics has opened registration for the 2021 Senior Softball Season. The Silver Division (age 50 to 64) has filled 36 of the 112 spots and the Gold Division (65-and-up) has filled 32 of the 96 spots. The registrations are accepted on a first come first serve basis. All our games are played at the Fish & Game in Ludlow. For further information or to register go to <http://www.westernmass-relics.org>.

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RACES • from page 9

“We have something for everyone at the Icebreaker,” PASS president Tom Mayberry said. “It’s important to start the season with a bang, and we’ve put together a line-up to do just that. We know a lot of people are looking forward to the Outlaw Open Modified Series debut, but there’s plenty of other action planned for fans of both open-wheel and full-fender racing.”

Entries are already pouring in for the 125-lap Outlaw Open main event. Two of the biggest names on the list are Franklin, MA’s Bobby Santos III and Milford, CT’s Doug Coby. Santos has posted four career Tour-type Modified victories at Thompson Speedway and six at New Hampshire Motor Speedway. He recently triumphed in the famed Little 500 for Sprint Cars at Indiana’s Anderson Speedway. Coby is a six-time champion of the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour with six victories at Thompson.

Other notable Modified standouts on the early entry list include former Modified Racing Series and, International Supermodified Association Champion Jon McKennedy, former NASCAR Advance

Auto Parts Weekly Series National Champion Keith Rocco, 2011 NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour Champion Ronnie Silk, and Mike Christopher Jr., the winner of the Budweiser Modified Open at last October’s World Series of Speedway Racing. They’ll be joined by Northeast household names such as Matt Swanson, Eric Goodale, Andy Shaw, Carl Medeiros Jr., and Dan Meservey.

A limited amount of garage stalls are still available for Icebreaker weekend. These will be awarded to Outlaw Open Modified Series competitors in the order their entries are received.

The Icebreaker 125 is the opener of the new Outlaw Open Modified Series. The six-pack of big-money events concludes with the \$20,000-to-win Thompson 300 on October 9 and 10 as part of the 59th World Series of Speedway Racing. In between are four 75-lap events on Wednesday nights throughout the summer that will pay a minimum of \$5,000-to-win. Rules, entry forms, and other information for the Outlaw Open Modified Series is available at www.acttour.com/outlaw-open-modifieds or www.racedayct.com/thompson2021.

MASCAC • from page 9

student-athletes and our staff as our priority, the difficult decision was made to cancel the fall in spring MASCAC competition,” Baumann said.

Although fall MASCAC competition has been canceled, the state universities will continue to provide student-athletes with on-campus, in-person practices, conditioning, and training opportunities during the spring semester in order to support their physical and mental well-being. These practice and training opportunities will not use a year of NCAA Eligibility and will be done in compliance with campus, state and federal COVID guidance and protocols.

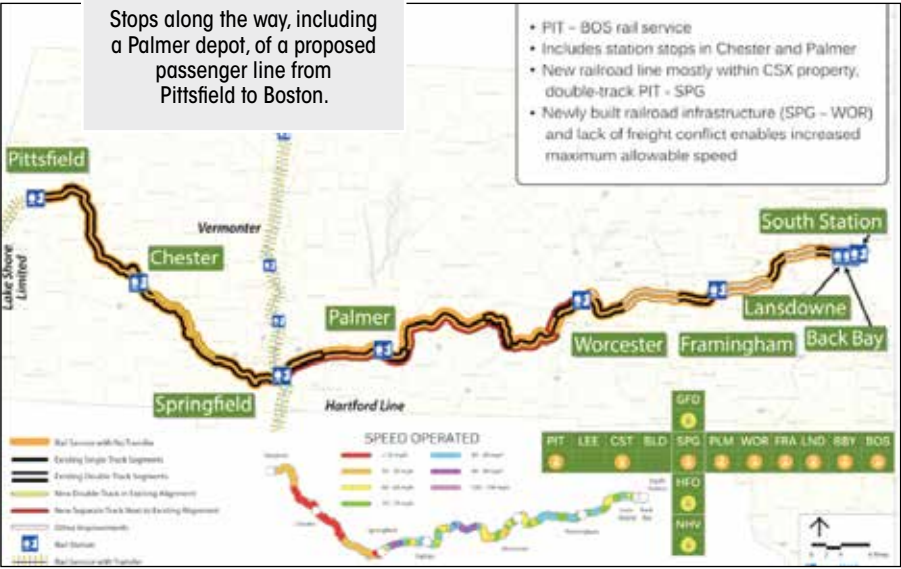
“The MASCAC Presidents know the value of intercollegiate athletics to our campus community and how important sports are to our student-athletes. The news that we need to cancel the fall conference competition is understandably disappointing, but the health and safety of our students and staff is of the utmost importance,” said Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts President James Birge, Chair of the MASCAC Council of Presidents.

“These are unprecedented times and making the difficult decision to cancel fall conference competition is equally unprecedented. We will continue to monitor the facts and re-evaluate the status of athletics as information and data evolves,” said President Birge.

The MASCAC Presidents are hopeful that a spring sports season will occur and plan to announce their decision in February.

“We are disappointed conference competition couldn’t be provided for our fall student-athletes in the spring,” said MASCAC Commissioner Angela Baumann. “We are still creating plans to play the spring sports season and are hopeful we will be able to provide those student-athletes an athletic experience.”

Throughout the 2020-21 academic year, the MASCAC will be celebrating its’ 50th anniversary with special features, facts and trivia commemorating the event. Our conference has a rich history of success on the playing field and in the classroom. Over the academic year, the conference will be highlighting the student-athletes, teams, coaches, and administrators from the last 50 years.



RAIL STUDY • from page 3

for this. They don’t know our town. We have to put it in place for them and say here’s the solution and maybe give them a second option.”

Palmer Town Council President Lorinda Baker, who also serves on the committee, said east-west rail advocates might have an inside track with the Biden administration – Buttigieg. She said she heard the former mayor of South Bend, Ind., who ran for president in 2020, is at least an acquaintance, if not a friend, of Lesser.

Lesser referenced Buttigieg in his statement:

“The study comes at the right moment given President-Elect Biden’s long history of infrastructure advocacy, and his passion for train transportation in particular, along with his nominee to be Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg,” Lesser said.

Setting Priorities

While the study presents various scenarios of how and where actual construction would begin, the committee members all agree that the Springfield phase should get priority. The study itself called it a “worthwhile starting point.” Hood and Miller sent a letter recently to Baker and Mass. Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack asking for it.

“Indeed the need for expanded rail service between the three largest cities in the Commonwealth should take priority, especially when there is almost no train service

at present between two of them,” they said in the letter.

“Worcester and Springfield are the 2nd and 4th largest cities in New England. Worcester has a metropolitan area population of 947,404, and Springfield has a metropolitan area population of 697,382.... It is time for the Commonwealth to fill in the gaping hole in New England train service, between Springfield and Worcester. There is no need for more study, since the Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative (2016) already proposed a reasonable service plan for this corridor, vetted by a Tier 1 Environmental Assessment that found minimal or no impacts.

“The NNEIRI preferred alternative service plan includes 8 round-trip trains per day serving Boston-Framingham-Worcester-Palmer-Springfield-Hartford-New Haven. MassDOT should prioritize development and implementation of a plan to run 8 round-trip trains per day serving Worcester-Palmer-Springfield, timed to connect seamlessly with CTrail service at Springfield, with bus service at Palmer to UMass/Amherst, and with MBTA Commuter Rail service at Worcester.

“This first phase of a phased approach to East-West passenger rail would address the greatest need, which is to connect Springfield to Worcester and Boston. This first phase would have an added advantage that it could utilize the detailed work already done as part of the NNEIRI study, as well as the findings and recommendations of the East-West Passenger Rail Study.”



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POLICE LOGS

Belchertown

Editor’s note: The following are brief explanations of select entries in the Belchertown Police log and arrests for the weeks of Jan. 20 through Jan. 26. The information was provided by a member of the police department based on the review of the detailed log summary. This feature is designed to provide context and explanation to some of the calls police respond to every day. Of the 276 calls police responded to, there were 10 incidents, eight accidents, field arrest/summons and five citations.

ARRESTS/SUMMONS

Monday, Jan. 25

12:56 a.m. – John W. Parrott, 52, homeless, was arrested on a warrant. Officers responded to Amherst Rd residence for a report of a person who was not allowed there. The reporting party said they didn’t want the suspect at their residence. Officers found that the person had a warrant for their arrest. The clerk was contacted and transported to the regional lock up in Northampton.

3:51 p.m. – A 61-year-old Granby man was issued a summons on charges of intimidating a witness and operating a motor vehicle with a revoked license. Officers responded to a Federal St business for a report of hit and run. The calling party provided a description of the vehicle that left. The officer spoke with the involved party, who was going to work at the business. The party was going east on George Hannum and turned right into the rear of business, as she began turning a pickup truck passed her on the right side and side swiped the vehicle. There was damage to the passenger’s side door and corner panel. Both vehicle stopped, and the operator of the truck asked if the reporting party was okay. The reporting party was told by the driver that they would take care of the damage, and the reporting party wrote their license plate down. The operator then left. Granby Police Department reported the truck operator reported the accident was the other party’s fault. The operator claimed the vehicle suddenly swiped their truck. The party was mailed a citation for their offense.

10:09 p.m. – A 72-year-old Belchertown man was issued a summons for charges of assault and battery on a disabled person/60

plus person. Officers responded to Everett Ave for a physical disturbance between neighbors. One party was making noise and the other party went to tell them to keep the noise down. The noisy party was pushed backwards into a wall by the stairwell and was pushed downstairs. The party cut their left hand while trying to stop themself. The party declined medical attention and did not want to press charged. The involved party was located and charged accordingly.

Tuesday, Jan. 26

4:16 p.m. – Officers responded to an accident on Bay Rd. The operator swerved due to the snowy roadway and ran off the road on the right hand side to avoid another vehicle. After sliding up a slight hill the vehicle overturned. The vehicle tuck two mailboxes on the hill. No injuries were reported but the vehicle was towed.

ACCIDENTS/INCIDENTS

Wednesday, Jan. 20

10:41 p.m. – Officers responded to a report of an accident. A vehicle travelling in the area of the Police Station struck a sign in the parking lot. The vehicle was able to be driven from the scene.

Thursday, Jan. 21

11:54 a.m. – Officers responded to an accident on Federal St and Allen Rd. One vehicle traveling west on Federal St. while a second on Allen Rd. was unable to stop due to the snowy roadway. The second slid out onto Federal St. and was struck by the first. No injuries were reported. Both vehicles were able to be driven away.

12:34 p.m. – Officers responded to an accident on Bay Rd. A vehicle travelling west on Bay Rd during snowstorm, lost control and ran off the road on the right side. The vehicle spun into the yard of a residence and ended up in a ditch. The vehicle able to be driven from scene after being towed from the ditch. No injuries were reported.

Friday, Jan. 22

12:56 p.m. – Officers took a call from a victim of scam. They said there a notice was issued about their antivirus software which requested access to their computer. The hacker then accessed their bank account. The hacker then wired \$30,000 from a bank account and wanted it back.

The person involved notified their bank to secure thier accounts.

5:02 p.m. – Officers responded to an accident on Federal St. The operator was travelling west on Federal St when a deer ran into the westbound lane from the woods. The deer was struck by the vehicle on the right side fender had damage. No injuries were reported, and the vehicle was towed by a private company.

6:47 p.m. – Officers responded to assist Belchertown fire and paramedics.

Saturday, Jan. 23

12:16 p.m. – Officers took a report from a resident who received a notice on their computer of an order that didn’t take place. The caller attempted to correct the mistake online and the hacker asked for information, which the caller provided. There was no money missing, but the caller was advised to contact their bank and credit agencies.

11 p.m. – Officers responded to a 911 fire report of structure fire, box two working residential structure fire.

Monday, Jan. 25

9:34 a.m. – Officers took a report of someone who got into their bank account with two unauthorized purchases.

1:56 p.m. – Officers took a report from a person who received an unemployment statement in May. The resident reported he didn’t make the claim. However, the resident received a 1099 form reporting they got unemployment. The resident was instructed on how to file a false claim.

5:36 p.m. – An officer took a report of a person who received a 1099 form for unemployment benefits in 2020 in which they did not.

Tuesday, Jan. 26

4:23 p.m. –A 26-year-old Belchertown woman was issued a citation for operating with a suspended license. Officers responded to North Washington St for a report of two car accident. The officers made contact with the operators. One party said they had stomach pain and were transported to the hospital. A query of license status said suspended license and was issued a citation for same.

5:10 p.m. – Officers to responded to Everett St to conduct a wellbeing check. An ambulance was contacted to the scene and a section 12 completed. A party was

transported to the hospital.

5:50 p.m. – Officers responded to a one car accident. The operator was travelling east on West St, as the vehicle was coming down a large hill approaching a corner, the vehicle slid off roadway into a tree. A party made contact for a tow. No injuries were reported.

Granby

Editor’s Note: The Granby Police Department responded to 171 calls for the week of Jan. 22 through Jan. 28. Those arrested are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. All information is provided by the Granby Police Department.

Friday, Jan. 22

12:22 p.m. – Officers issued a criminal citation for an uninsured motor vehicle operation.

Saturday, Jan. 23

6:56 p.m. – Patrick Hogan, 50, of 209 Amherst St., Granby, was arrested for possession of class B drugs.

Sunday, Jan. 24

1:47 p.m. – Officers took a report of identity theft. The incident is still under investigation.

7:22 p.m. – Officers issued a criminal citation for an unlicensed motor vehicle operation.

Tuesday, Jan. 26

7:09 p.m. – Officers investigated a motor vehicle accident on State St. The operator drove off the roadway and stuck a utility pole.

Wednesday, Jan. 27

9:27 a.m. – Officers investigated a motor vehicle accident on Chicopee St and Carver St. The operator drove off the roadway and caused property damage.

Thursday, Jan. 28

3:27 p.m. – Officers investigated a two car accident on West State St. No injuries were reported.

3:30 p.m. – Officers investigated a two car accident on West State St. No injuries were reported.

Belchertown children’s meals program menu

For the week of Feb. 8 to Feb. 12

Note: Tuesday through Thursday are small meal kit items

Monday: Breakfast: mini-waffles and fruit. Lunch: New England chicken salad scoop and goldfish pickles.

Tuesday (Small Meal Kits come home): Breakfast: cereal bar, yogurt and 100% fruit juice. Lunch: cheese pizza, Caesar salad and school-baked cookie.

Wednesday - Curbside Meal Kit Pickup at BHS 11 a.m. from 1 p.m. Remote learning day, no in school meals.

Thursday: Breakfast: cereal, cheese stick and 100% fruit juice. Lunch: turkey sandwich, chips and mixed vegetables.

Friday – Small meal kits come home and orders due today for next week. Breakfast: muffin and fruit. Lunch: hamburger, fries and fruit.

Note: Pre-k and Kindergarten will offer a daily in-school alternative choice: Muffin, yogurt, vegetable, fruit, and milk

Grades 1 though 6 will offer a daily in-school alternate choice: Sunbutter and Jelly sandwich, vegetable, fruit and milk

Grades 7 to 12 will offer daily in-school alternative choices: pizza station, deli bar and pre-made salads

Granby Library offers free workshops

GRANBY – The Granby Library is happy to announce these free workshops through partners at Collaborative for Educational Services. Join in!

Music and movement!

An interactive music and movement workshop for parents and their children aged 1 to 5.

Wednesdays from 9:30 to 10 a.m.
February 3, 10 and 24.
March 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31.

Drop into one or all the sessions with Andy Goulet. Free. Register for Music and movement classes - here’s a link to registration: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScWPrY9HyaaCG6nbRGS0j-faC8lIxednSJuWLJHSaRjWkpn_iQ/form-Response or e-mail earlychildhood@collaborative.org for the Zoom link.

Yoga for Families: breathe, stretch, and bond

Parent only - self-care/relaxation on Thursday evenings from 7 to 8 p.m.

Parent/child Yoga on Monday mornings from 9:30 to 10 a.m.

Stephanie Koller will present a twelve-week workshop series to help parents and their children build a “Winter Wellness Toolbox” through the weekly practice of QiYoga. Incorporating varying mindfulness

themes each week, both children and their parents will learn helpful ways to maintain a healthy balance between active movement and tranquil breathing. On Monday mornings, Stephanie will offer parent/child interactive experiences, and on Thursday evenings the focus will be on a mindful movement practice to help parents nurture themselves. Runs through March 1. Register for Zoom Yoga for families here’s a link to registration: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScWPrY9HyaaCG6nbRGS0j-faC8lIxednSJuWLJHSaRjWkpn_iQ/form-Response or email earlychildhood@collaborative.org for the Zoom link.

LAMPSON • from page 1

will also be an ex-officio member from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and a member from one of the entities will own the forest or community parcels.

Spiegel explained the task the board will have in the next year.

“The two most important (tasks) are to create a management plan that will cover the entire site, to provide for the permanent protection and stewardship, and to establish a fund which will be able to receive money for the purpose of maintaining the site. This has been a challenge over these last few decades,” said Spiegel. “The board will have to see the dissolution of the site as it currently exists and the transfer to responsible entities that will take charge of certain parts of the site. (As well as) take part and provide ongoing oversight for activities of

the site. The Board of Directors is considered a body politic by the legislature and has legal standing.”

The area will be divided into five parcels, Spiegel explained. These parcels will “create a patchwork of land units devoted to specific purposes that continue the preservation and historic value of the site by providing for five different areas under care of Board of Directors,” Spiegel said.

A community farm parcel, where the barn is found will be where a lot of community activities occur. The second area is the enterprise zone which will encompass both all the existing old Barre complex and the area near Jackson and George Hannum Rd where the Old Poor Farm was located. The third is a commercial agricultural field, which are the larger agricultural fields that have been farmed as such for decades. The fourth is homestead parcel which will go to the New England Small Farms Institute to

continue education, experimental farming demonstrations, etc.

The fifth parcel is the forest parcel, which is the largest parcel which will go to an appropriate nonprofit stewardship organization, Spiegel said.

One responsibility of the Board of Directors, once the management plan is created, will be to put out a request for proposals for appropriate agencies or organizations to take on responsibility for the forest parcel and the community farm parcel.

Spiegel said he hopes the board will be able to have its first meeting later in February.

“The management plan will need to be in place, (and) a survey in place, accepted by legislature and the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance within this year,” Spiegel said. “It will be an ongoing responsibility.”

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Hearing
Legal Notice
Belchertown
Zoning Board of Appeals

In accordance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40A, Section 11 the Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 6:30 PM**

This hearing will be held remotely, Please join meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/986366629>

You can also dial in using your phone.

(For supported devices, tap a one-touch number below to join instantly.)

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Application from Jean Guy Girard applying for a Special Permit \$145-69; \$145-11 Schedule of Use, to con-

struct a two-family house: 145 Attachment 1:1 (2) on North Main Street Map 238 Parcel 156 zoned VR

A copy of the application can be viewed at Belchertown.org website

Any Person interested and wishing to be heard should appear at the time and place designated.

Mark Hebert, Chairman
Zoning Board of Appeals
01/28, 02/04/2021

Please check the accuracy of your legal notice prior to submission (i.e., date, time, spelling). Also, be sure the requested publication date coincides with the purpose of the notice, or as the law demands. Thank you.

RINTALA • from page 1

scene. Prosecutors argued that Rintala poured the paint shortly before police arrived at the home, in an effort to conceal the crime and contaminate the scene.

Superior Court Judge Richard Carey wrote in his Jan. 26 decision denying Rintala's motion for a stay that her argument is "wanting and without any weight."

In her request to be released from prison pending the Supreme Judicial Court's decision on her appeal, Rintala also cited the risk of contracting COVID-19 in prison. But Judge Carey wrote that prisoners in Massachusetts are now being vaccinated against the virus and "the specific risk to this defendant, in view of her age and medical conditions, is minimal."

The SJC is expected to hear Rintala's appeal in early April.

"We are pleased the Court denied the defendant's request to be released from prison pending her appeal, and we look forward to her conviction being affirmed," said Gagne.

SSI • from page 6

benefit adjustment until January of each year. That's why you got only the age 69 benefit when you started your benefits in October and why your payment in November and December didn't include those DRCs.

The Social Security payment you received in January was actually for your December benefits, and included the 2021 COLA increase (which is computed using your December benefit). And just as an FYI, they do apply DRCs immediately for anyone who claims at age 70, regardless of the month they claim. What happened to you was because you claimed before you were 70.

The additional 6% DRCs you earned between January and September last year should be applied in January of this year and should be included in your next benefit check, which you will receive in February (Social Security pays benefits in the month following when they are earned). When they do that computation, they'll automatically adjust your COLA using your new benefit amount. So, what you were told by the Social Security agent is essentially correct – your benefit payment won't reflect those additional DRCs for 2020 until your January 2021 payment, which you will receive in February.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadviser@amacfoundation.org.

Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor with AMAC.

OBITUARIES

Stanley Antonovitch



BELCHERTOWN - Stanley "Stike" Antonovitch, 89, passed away Jan. 27, 2021 at home. He was born on May 16, 1931 in Ware, to Leon and Anna (Janik) Antonovitch.



Stike was a lifelong resident of Belchertown and a communicant of St. Francis Church as well as a Fourth Degree Knight in the Knights of Columbus. He proudly served his country as a Corporal in the United States Army during the Korean War. After his dedicated service, he went on to work as a herdsman and carpenter for over 30 years for the Belchertown State School and also ran the family farm. Stanley was always known to lend a helping hand, volunteering for the Special Olympics and at the annual Belchertown Fair. Stike specifically enjoyed helping at the horse pulling competitions and the livestock events at the fair.

He is survived by his two sons, James Antonovitch of Belchertown and Kevin Antonovitch of South Dennis; his sister, Anna Donovan of Belchertown and his beloved grandson, Brandon of Yarmouthport. He will also be deeply missed by his close friend, Christina (Owczarski) Roney and her sons Stephen and Daniel of Belchertown. Stanley was predeceased by his wife, Patricia L. (Wykowski) Antonovitch.

A Funeral Mass was held Wed. Feb. 3, 2021 at 11 a.m. at St. Francis Church. Please meet directly at the church. Burial is private. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Belchertown Fair Committee for the horse pulling competitions, an event Stike enjoyed so much. For more information visit www.beersandstory.com

Patricia J. Mitchell

BELCHERTOWN—Patricia J. (Adam) Mitchell, 71, passed away at home on Jan. 22.

Daughter of the late Christian and Lucette (Ribault) Adam, she was born in Palmer on Dec. 14, 1949. Patricia worked for many years as a substitute teacher for Belchertown Public Schools and enjoyed visiting Maine, tennis, watching sporting events and spending time with her grandchildren.

Patricia will be missed by all who knew her, including her daughters Sarah Mitchell Bean and her husband Gregory of Belchertown and

Amanda Leigh Martin and her husband, Andrew of West Springfield, as well as her son, David Mitchell and his wife, Linda of Wilbraham; her brother, Richard Adam and his wife, Leigh of North Carolina; her grandchildren, Jaden and Harper, and Olivia and Logan; as well as many extended family members and friends.



Visitation will be Sunday, Feb. 21 from 2 to 5 p.m. at Beers & Story Belchertown Funeral Home.

For more information or to leave a memory, please visit www.beersandstory.com

Barbara K. Rosazza

BELCHERTOWN – Barbara K. (Kennedy) Rosazza of Belchertown passed peacefully into the lord's hands on Sunday Jan. 24, 2021. Born on Jan. 18, 1931, she was the beloved daughter of the late Leo J. and Hazel (Clark) Kennedy.

Barbara was the adored wife of Irving R. (Red) Rosazza and a devoted mother to her "Danny Boy" Daniel C. Rosazza, both of whom predeceased her. She leaves her cherished sister, Doris E. Keough, of Mashpee. Loving mother of sons, Robert and his wife Sheila of Belchertown, John and his wife Karen of Templeton, Richard and his wife Elizabeth of Granby; and daughter Lynn Galenski and fiancé Frank Pizzo of Enfield, CT. Barbara "Nana B" was the proud grandmother of seven grandchildren, Jessica and Alex Galenski, Caitlin and Rob Rosazza, RJ and Dominic Rosazza and Joshua Herzberg.

Born and raised in Holyoke, Barbara was a child of the "Great Depression" and World War II. She often shared her memories of those difficult times and the sacrifice families had to endure. A graduate of Westfield State teachers college, Barbara met her future husband "Red" on a blind date. Red, a returning Army veteran, was smitten with Barb and was

relentless in his pursuit of her hand in marriage. She was an elementary teacher for many years serving the children of South Hadley, Springfield and Valentine School in Chicopee. Barbara was a communicant of St. Francis of Assisi, a past president of the St. Francis women's club, Chairwoman of the Christmas bazaar and was often seen working the church booth at the Belchertown Fair. She loved to travel and was a passionate companion to Red on the many banking conventions they attended over the years, Hawaii being her favorite destination. A frequent patron of the Clapp Memorial library, Nana was an avid reader, loved a good tag sale and the local thrift shops all knew her on a first name basis. Her true love and devotion was to her family, especially her beloved grandchildren. A Funeral Mass was held on Monday, Feb. 1 at 11 a.m. at the St Francis Parish in Belchertown. Barbara was laid to rest at Veterans' Memorial Cemetery.



In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Barbara's memory to: The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund.

For more information, please visit www.beersandstory.com

DEATH NOTICES

Stanley Antonovitch
Died: Jan. 27, 2021
Burial is private

Barbara K. Rosazza (Kennedy)
Died: Jan. 24, 2021

Patricia J. Mitchell (Adam)
Died: Jan. 22, 2021
Visitation Feb. 21
2 to 5 p.m.
Beers & Story
Belchertown
Funeral Home

The Sentinel
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POLICY

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9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32
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Mary Lane ER, cancer unit to close in June

Facility set to be closed in two years

MELINA BOURDEAU
Staff writer

WARE – Baystate Health announced it planned to close Mary Lane Outpatient Center’s doors completely by 2023, with the closure of the Emergency Room and cancer unit in June.

Baystate Health President and CEO Mark A. Keroack and President and Chief Administrative Officer Molly Gray announced the closure of the 112-year-old facility in a press conference on Tuesday.

“This is part and parcel of an ongoing assessment that Baystate does to adapt to changes in demand for our services and to stay contemporary in how we deliver our care,” he said.

Factors for closure

Gray and Keroack attributed Mary Lane’s closure to several factors – the building’s age, the lack of use by the community and lack of staff retention.

He said over the years the volumes for the in-patient services at Mary Lane were declining to the “point where they averaged in the single-digits in 2016 when we decided to shutter those services.”

In 2016, Baystate pledged to keep the emergency department open at Mary Lane for at least several years.

These trends have continued, according to Gray.

“Patients are actually choosing to receive care in other locations,” Gray said. “Today, nearly half of Baystate Mary Lane Outpatient Center is vacant by day and 90% unused at night. Baystate Mary Lane’s emergency department has had minimal utilization for true emergency services of the 28 patients who arrive at that site for care 85% or 24 out of 28 of the patients present with common, minor, non-urgent conditions like a cold, flu or sprain that could be treated in a primary care setting.”

Additionally, Baystate has had difficulty recruiting and retaining providers in the area, especially in small practices. Gray said in the last two to three years, a net loss of six primary care positions were lost in its Eastern Region.

“This is a market reality that reflects the need to consolidate practices in support of clinicians,” Gray said. “Candidates really seek robust, multi-specialty practices.”

Another attributing factor to Mary Lane’s closure is the building’s age.

Gray said “to maintain steady-state operations would require over \$5 million in construction investments to maintain the facility, compliance and operations over the next three years.”

Baystate will consolidate operations at Baystate Wing to “better invest resources in state-of-the-art care, emergency care and physician recruitment and retention. This will really allow us for more effective staffing in an area where recruiting clinical professionals can be challenging.”

Five years ago, Baystate closed in-patient services at Mary Lane. Local members of the community opposed the decision, including the Keep Mary Lane Local Coalition.

Keroack said five years ago he heard “some really raw emotions from people who had fond memories of Mary Lane.”

“I understand how a community gets attached to a hospital, my responsibility is to take a look at what can we do there. What’s the best way to configure services for all the 100,000 people in the dozens of town that are served in our eastern region,” Keroack said. “When you look at what people feels in their hearts is often not matched with what they’re doing in terms of their choices of where to go when they’re sick...It’s something where I need to put my emotions aside and take an objective look can we legitimately offer something there that makes sense or try to consolidate services and make Wing more robust.” Keroack said both his parents were born in Mary Lane in the 1920s.

Next steps

The formal process requires Baystate make notice to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health which was filed in the days following the announcement, Keroack said.

The DPH will conduct hearings and issue a ruling as to whether Baystate’s plan will be approved.

“We’re also planning to have a virtual town hall in the next few weeks,” Keroack said.

Baystate Wing would consolidate Mary Lane, which Gray said has been “fit tested.”

“We have a new emergency service here at Wing and there is space to accommodate all the visits that are happening in the Eastern Region and have additional growth if need be,” said Gray. “When we talk about this taking a period of time over two to three years, we are going to be relocating the services we provide at Mary Lane to Wing Hospital and that will require an investment in construction and expansion.”

Keroack said Baystate would spend about \$10 to \$15 million investment to “refurbish, upgrade and expand that facility.”

In terms of what to do with the site, Keroack said Baystate would be in conversation with Ware officials.

“We certainly would be willing to demolish the existing building if there is no use for it and gift the land to the town as green space,” said Keroack.

He added that if the town had use for the building Baystate would not demo the building, but “we haven’t thought of anything the town would be able to do with the building. Perhaps they have ideas and we would just have to



Baystate Health plans to ask the Department of Public Health to let it close its Mary Lane campus and move services to Palmer and Springfield.

have conversations with them.”

Gray and Keroack said the roughly 80 Mary Lane employees would continue to be employed by Baystate due to a high need in the company.

“This is a good time in health care because there are many opportunities,” Gray said. “We will be working with individuals one on one.”

To address the need for transportation in the area, Keroack said Baystate has “really thought through the issue.”

“We already were funding the Quaboag Connector which provides about 1,000 rides per month in the Quaboag Valley towns, particularly between Palmer and Ware for appointments,” he said. “We’re likely going to need to expand those services and include occasional trips to Springfield because cancer patients will be able to get some kind of treatment at Wing, but the more elaborate kinds of treatments would require a trip to Springfield.”

Community members react

Keroack said the closure of the hospital is “going to be a blow to the town beyond the healthcare side of things.”

“I think it’s part of the identity of the town when something that’s been there for 100 years just suddenly goes away,” he said. “Obviously, it’s been shrinking considerably for quite some time.”

But it’s also a change in how emergency services are delivered before a patient gets to a hospital.

“I really wish there was more planning before they dropped this on us,” said Fire Chief Christopher Gagnon.

With the emergency satellite facility closing in approximately six months, Gagnon said it doesn’t give the Ware Fire Department much time to plan for how to deal with the change.

Ambulances will be out of service for longer times as trips will always be to Palmer or Springfield instead of to Mary Lane.

“Our ability to respond to multiple calls quickly is now vastly diminished,” Gagnon said. Using a trip by an ambulance downtown, responding to a patient and taking them to Mary Lane, which took perhaps 30 minutes all told, the drive will increase for each and every trip.

“We’ve had the luxury of being able to turn our trucks around quickly, but we’ll lose that,” he said.

Gagnon said he is also worried about having to call in additional manpower on overtime when multiple medical calls come in while one ambulance is already in Palmer or beyond.

“There will also be more wear and tear on our vehicles,” he said, with each trip being out-of-town.

“The overall impact is going to be a huge logistical change,” he said. “But we’ll have to learn to adjust. It’s a real disappointment to us.”

A possible positive

“It’s really sad; it’s a shock,” said Tracy Opalinski, who worked to keep Mary Lane open as a hospital in 2016, and said there were no prior discussions with the town or major donors about these plans. “They were investing significantly with Healogics’ wound care center, and a \$1 million pharmacy, which was delayed by COVID, was supposed to go in,” she said, as well as the radiology upgrade and enhanced oncology department as well.

Despite her anger and disappointment, she hopes something positive can come out of the situation, as Baystate has said at the end of two years it would gift the property to the town, with or without the building.

“The times are changing, but change doesn’t always have to be something bad,” she said. Something positive could go on the site, whether it was a health clinic or some other project.

Bob Kelley, in-house counsel for Optimus Living, the owner of Cedarbrook Village, the large assisted living facility built next to the hospital, said the company was very surprised by the move.

He said the company plans to have a collaborative relationship with Baystate Health, whether its closest facility is at Mary Lane or in Palmer.

Kelley also said Optimus Living or another company might see the property as “a good place for an anchor residence with market-rate housing.”

He said he believes Baystate will do the right thing by winding down the campus with dignity, and he understands that Mary Lane is a very old building that would be difficult to update.

For more information, Baystate has launched a website specifically about the eastern region at <https://www.baystatehealth.org/easternregion>.

Staff writer Eileen Kennedy contributed to this story.

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